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★ news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Commercial Fisheries

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CRAB CLEANING MACHINE

The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries said today that a machine has been developed to deback and clean blue crabs which are an important part of the shellfish industry along the East and Gulf coasts.

Under a contract with the Bureau's Technological Laboratory, College Park, Md., the American Scientific Corporation of Alexandria, Va., created the machine which is being hailed a major breakthrough for the crab industry. Blue crabs now are debacked and cleaned entirely by hand. Because of rising labor costs and the loss of skilled labor to other industries, the shellfish industry has experienced diminishing returns in recent years.

The machine punches through the shell of precooked crabs, taking an amount of lump and flake meat comparable to that obtained by hand. The crabmeat is then easily removed from the shell and cartilage by hand. Preliminary tests indicate that the machine eliminates several steps of the hand operation.

Arrangements are being made by the Department to obtain patent protection for the Government.

Donald L. McKernan, Director of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, said research will continue toward developing additional machinery to remove the crabmeat from the cores punched out by the new device. He said future research will also aim at devising machinery to remove any flake meat remaining in the crab as well as the meat from the claws.

Demonstrations of the new machine have been scheduled at several locations where the blue crab industry is an important part of the economy. It was shown to operators in Brunswick, Ga., March 30 and will be shown in New Orleans, La., April 2; in Newport News, Va., April 6; and in Cambridge, Md., April 8.

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